First Steps Provider Guidelines
September 2003

The following information applies to **all providers** enrolled with the Central Finance Office (CFO). These procedures take effect immediately and providers currently enrolled will be given a 30-day window to complete the requirements.

I. General Requirements

Enrollment Procedures

DESE is required to develop Personnel Standards for the First Steps System. These requirements are contained in the Personnel Section of the Part C State Plan and can be accessed on the web site at http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Compliance/Part-C/stateplan/sec_viii.pdf.

In order to enroll in the system, providers must:

- meet the educational qualifications;
- meet the certification/licensure requirements;
- pass the Highway Patrol/DFS background checks;
- obtain liability insurance, if applicable, for provider type. To view information related to provider type, please visit: http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/pdfs/fspersonstand04.pdf
- complete the Orientation Training Module and,
- complete additional modules required for each provider type by the specified deadlines. To view the training deadlines, please visit: http://mu-cise-web1.coe.missouri.edu/web-cal/.

Exceptions

The Division is receiving an increase in calls requesting an exception to the Personnel Standards. State regulations include the following policy to address shortage of personnel: http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/Compliance/Part-C/stateplan/sec_viii.pdf

As of August 1, 2003, the Division will no longer accept requests for exceptions unless a SPOE region can document the unavailability of personnel meeting the educational qualifications and certification/licensure requirements.

Future Direction – Provider Qualifications

The Division is proposing changes to the current Part C personnel regulations. The public comment period for the proposed changes has been announced via the First Steps list serve and proposed changes are posted on the First Steps website.

II. Training Requirements

A schedule of First Steps Module trainings is available at http://mu-cise-web1.coe.missouri.edu/web-cal/. In order to maintain enrollment in the system, providers must complete Module I, Orientation. This module is now available as a free on-line training for easier access. To register for this training and view training session dates, please visit: http://dese.mo.gov/divspeced/FirstSteps/ModuleIWelcome.html.
In order to gain sequential knowledge regarding the First Steps system, it is recommended that the modules be taken in order, however, it is permissible to take the modules in any order.

III. Renewal Requirements

Evidence of annual background checks and liability insurance

The *Central Finance Office Service Provider/Payee Agreement* specifies that providers must submit evidence of liability insurance and a criminal background check on an annual basis to the CFO. The Division has modified the submission requirements to once every three (3) years. During the intervening years, the Division will accept assurance statements from providers indicating no change in liability insurance coverage or criminal background since the last submission. The CFO will notify providers by e-mail two (2) months prior to their annual assurance requirement or triennial submission requirement. On-line assurance documents will be available by December 2003. Current providers enrolled in the system for at least one year may wait until the on-line assurance documents are available to comply with this requirement. You will be notified when the assurances are available for completion.

DESE has decided to delay the First Steps credential renewals until January 2005.

Upon receipt of the Initial First Steps Credential, all providers should maintain their own personal file to document activities for credential renewal in January 2005. Documentation should include:

- Records of work experience
- Documentation of coursework or degrees
- Documentation of workshop attendance

Specific guidance for the submission of information will be provided to the field in the fall of 2004. No pre-approval for specialized education or other activities will be granted between now and January 2005.

IV. Matrix

Review and update of provider information is required on a regular basis

Newly enrolled providers have 15 days from notification of enrollment to complete their Matrix information. This is outlined in the *Central Finance Office Service Provider/Payee Agreement* Section E-2. Passwords must be obtained from the CFO prior to completing the information and the enrollment letter contains information about obtaining a password. Providers or agencies that have not obtained a password may request a password at http://missouri.eikids.com. Select edit matrix/logon and follow the directions.

After initial data entry, all providers must login to the Matrix and review/update the information every **three (3) months**. The Matrix includes a field for the date of the last update. That field will be monitored at the CFO and failure to update at least every three (3) months will result in the posting of a notice on the individual's Matrix page to inform viewers that the provider's availability may no longer be valid. Continued failure to update the Matrix will result in removal from view of the provider's information and no new authorizations for that provider will be permitted at the CFO. Finally, providers who have not updated the Matrix in a six (6) month period will be removed from the Matrix and enrollment with First Steps terminated.

Provider Availability
The Division has received numerous calls expressing concern regarding some of the information fields on the Provider Matrix. The Matrix is intended to inform families and service coordinators of individual providers available in their area to meet a specific service need. Therefore, the information provided must accurately represent the provider's availability. While the Matrix includes pertinent information about the provider's qualifications, some of the most important information on the Matrix for the family and the service coordinator is found under "Evaluation Availability", Ongoing Availability", "Counties served", and "Additional Comments".

The section "Counties served" must represent those counties that the provider is **willing to travel to in order to provide services**. If there is a difference between the counties you will travel to for evaluations versus the counties you will travel to for ongoing services, you will need to state that under this section of the Matrix. This section is a text field and will accept headings that state, "counties available for evaluation include…." and "counties available for ongoing services include…" Use of the section "Zip codes served" will be most beneficial to providers in large metropolitan areas who are not willing to travel to the entire metro area. If this is the case, you will need to list only those zip codes that cover the geographic area in which you are **willing to travel**.

Agencies who have listed all of the counties in the state under "Counties served" **must** remove any counties were they are **not willing to travel** to provide the services. These agencies may; however, indicate under "Additional Comments" that they will evaluate or otherwise serve a family willing to travel to their offices from anywhere in the state.

Providers will be given until **October 31, 2003,** to comply with these procedures for maintaining the Provider Matrix. After that date the, the CFO will implement monitoring procedures to enforce these requirements.

V. E-Mail

E-mail address required for each provider
All providers are required to have an e-mail address in order to receive regular update information pertaining to the First Steps system. Providers employed by agencies can use either a personal e-mail address or the company's address. If an agency address is used for multiple providers, the agency must have a method for distribution of the e-mailed information to all providers. The Provider Matrix includes a field for e-mail addresses and effective immediately, completion of that field is required. In order to add an e-mail address to your current matrix page, logon to the matrix, select "update your matrix", "personal section", and then "provider enrollment". Further directions will appear under provider enrollment. Providers will be given until **October 17, 2003** to provide the CFO with a current e-mail address.